DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 540 SP 025 979

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TITLE	Performance-Based Certification in Georgia: Present and Future.
SPONS AGENCY	National Commission on Excellence in Teacher Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	[84]
NOTE	18p.; For related document, see SP 025 975.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Beginning Teachers; Career Ladders; Competency Based Teacher Education; *Evaluation Criteria; Job Performance; Merit Pay; *Minimum Competency Testing; Preservice Teacher Education; Staff Development; *State Programs; *Teacher Certification; *Teacher Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS	*Georgia; National Commission on Excellence in Teacher Educ

ABSTRACT

The Georgia Teacher Certification Tests were developed and validated to be job-related and to reflect the minimum content knowledge that is necessary to teach in each certification area in Georgia classrooms. Three assessment instruments are used in evaluating the performance of preservice students and beginning teachers. The Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI) delineates 14 competencies required for certification. The Georgia Teachers Certification Tests (TCT) are used to determine whether prospective teachers possess essential knowledge in their respective teaching fields. The on-the-job assessment focuses on the teacher's capabilities to organize, plan, and implement instruction as well as on classroom management and interpersonal relationships with students. Each of these instruments is described in detail in this report. Included in the discussion on performance-based certification are brief descriptions of staff development processes and teacher evaluation. It is anticipated that performance-based certification will be expanded in the future and that a competitive and market sensitive career ladder program for teachers will be developed. (JD)

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ED253540

SP 025 979

PERFORMANCE-BASED CERTIFICATION

IN GEORGIA:

PRESENT AND FUTURE

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The concern for quality public education has been a continual topic for the news media. During the last year several national reports on public education seriously challenged the quality of educational opportunities being provided children. A Nation At Risk, prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, The Education Commission of the States' report, Action for Excellence, as well as Making the Grade, a report from the Twentieth Century Fund's Task Force on Elementary and Secondary Education Policy, all have expressed concern for the quality of public education. Falling SAT scores and other measures of student achievement have added to the increasing concern of parents, businesspersons, legislators and educators. With the media's negative focus on public education and the public's increasing concern for quality, it is important that clear indications of progress, commitment and success be made by those involved in public education.

It is generally agreed that formal training alone does not produce a competent, capable worker. To promote quality and ensure at least minimum competence, most trades and professions require some form of licensure based on a test of competence. This is true of physicians, lawyers, plumbers, cosmetologists and many other trades or professions. But in the past, this has not been true for teachers. The responsibility for determining the competence of teachers has been one that education associations and agencies have been reluctant to assume. The responsibility to ensure minimal competence ultimately falls to the licensing agency. As in most other states, the licensing agency in Georgia is the State Board of Education.

Developmental Efforts

Recognizing the need to provide assurance of minimal competency for licensure, in the late sixties the Georgia Board of Education through the Georgia Department of Education began developmental efforts in competency-based teacher education and

performance-based teacher certification. This direction for the department first emerged in the needs assessments conducted in Georgia beginning in 1968. In 1972, the state superintendent of schools announced that one of the 23 missions for the department of education was to certify personnel on the basis of demonstrated competency.

In 1975 an advisory group to the state board, the Teacher Education Council, recommended that the State Boa d of Education adopt policies providing that issuance of the initial teaching certificate be based on two criteria: a satisfactory score on a knowledge test external to the preparation process and completion of an approved teacher education program. The council further recommended that the renewable certificate be based on demonstrated performance and not merely on experience and/or a master's degree. The council proposed that these policies become effective on September 1, 1978. The State Board of Education accepted the recommendations and adopted the appropriate policies.

The Georgia Teacher Certification Tests were developed and validated to be job-related and to reflect the minimum content knowledge that is necessary to teach in each certification area in Georgia classrooms. The priorities as to objectives and content of the examinations, as well as the minimum cut-off scores, were determined by committees of outstanding Georgia educators in the respective certification fields. The items which measure the objectives were reviewed by the committees for item/objective content match, content accuracy, lack of bias and minimal competency. A job analysis was conducted throughout the state to determine the relative importance of each objective and the amount of time spent in teaching it.

The certification examinations are job-related to the public schools of Georgia. They are designed to be not a summative evaluation of an applicant's college preparation, but rather a test of grade-level subject matter that a teacher would be expected to know in order to be minimally competent to teach. The items

on the examination are relevant to the subject matter that is to be taught. Through a request for proposal, National Evaluation Systems, Inc., was selected to receive a state-funded contract in November 1975, to develop the tests working with a Georgia ad hoc committee of public school and college teachers in each of the teaching field areas.

Through another request for proposal, the University of Georgia began a state funded contract in April 1976, to develop the components for the state-designed system of assessing teaching competency on the job. More than 4,000 teachers, administrators and college professors were involved in identifying an initial set of 20 competencies as generic and essential for all subgroups, i.e., across grade levels, teaching fields and job settings. This set of 20 competencies was the basis for the development of instruments to guide the assessment of teaching behaviors.

The Assessment Instruments

The Teacher Performance Assessment Instruments (TPAI), composed of the Teaching Plans and Materials Instrument, the Classroom Procedures Instrument, the Interpersonal Skills Instrument, the Professional Standards Instrument and the Student Perceptions Instrument, were field tested across the state from the fall of 1977 through the spring of 1980. These field-test efforts involved training teachers and administrators to use the instruments in their assessment of student and beginning teachers. The results of these field tests, plus feedback from teachers assessed, from teachers and administrators using the instruments and various reliability and validity studies, reduced the number of competencies addressed by the TPAI to 16, with 14 identified to be required for certification.

The 14 competencies currently assessed are as follows.

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I. Plans instruction to achieve selected objectives.

II. Organizes instruction to take into account individual differences among learners.

III. Obtains and uses information about the needs and progress of individual learners.

IV. Obtains and uses information about the effectiveness of instruction to revise it when necessary.

VII. Communicates with learners.

VIII. Demonstrates a repertoire of teaching methods.

IX. Reinforces and encourages learner involvement in instruction.

X. Demonstrates an understanding of the school subject being taught.

XI. Organizes time, space, materials and equipment for instruction.

XII. Demonstrates enthusiasm for teaching and learning and the subject being taught.

XIII. Helps learners develop positive self-concepts.

XIV. Manages classroom interactions.

Each competency is defined by two to five performance indicators. For example, for Competency VII "Communicates with learners," the indicators are as follows.

4. Gives directions and explanations related to lesson content.

5. Clarifies directions and explanations when learners misunderstand lesson content.

6. Uses responses and questions from learners in teaching.

7. Provides feedback to learners throughout the lesson.

Each indicator is scored on a five-point scale. For example, for Indicator 7, "Provides feedback to learners throughout the lesson," the scale of descriptors is as follows.

1. Accepts learner comments or performance without feedback about their adequacy.
2. Responds to negative aspects of student work, but few comments are made about positive aspects.
3. Informs students of the adequacy of their performance. Few errors pass by without being addressed.
4. Helps learners evaluate the adequacy of their own performance.
5. In addition to 4, the teacher probes for the source of misunderstandings which arise.

The Certification Tests

The Georgia Teachers Certification Tests (TCT), implemented in 1978, are used to determine whether prospective teachers possess essential knowledge in their respective teaching fields. Twenty-eight tests covering 49 certification fields have been developed. They are administered three times each year at five sites over the state. A registration fee of $35, which accompanies the registration form, is sent directly to the testing contractor. Registration bulletins, copies of test objectives and study guides for the various tests are widely available.

It is recommended that prospective teachers take the TCT during the senior year of the college or university teacher education program. At the request of an employing superintendent, an initial one-year certificate can be issued even though an applicant has not posted a passing score on the appropriate TCT. This is primarily an escape valve for teachers coming into Georgia at the last minute who have not had an opportunity to take the TCT. Those who have not passed the test within the one-year validity period are not issued another certificate.

With the development of the Teacher Certification Tests and the on-the-job assessment employing the Teacher Performance Assessment Instruments, the state was

set to implement Performance-Based Certification. Test and assessment requirements applied to teachers completing preparation after May 1, 1980. The two performance-based components addressed two primary objectives.

1. To ensure that teachers can demonstrate minimum competency relative to subject knowledge and minimum performance in an on-the-job setting.
2. To extend preparation into the initial years of employment.

The Georgia University System Board of Regents in 1983 strengthened the preservice phase of the state's teacher education program, adopting a policy of placing on probation those public college teacher preparation programs whose students fall below a 70 passing rate on the TCT. Response from the colleges has been positive; many have restructured their curricula and are paying more attention to student results. The probationary institutions are required to submit a remediation plan.

On-the-Job Assessment

The on-the-job assessment focuses on the teacher's capabilities to organize, plan and implement instruction as well as on classroom management and interpersonal relationships with students. The assessment is coordinated by a fully state-funded, statewide network of 17 regional assessment centers. The centers are staffed with professional educators, most of whom have come directly from classroom teaching. Their responsibilities include the following.

1. Providing teachers with an orientation to the assessment process prior to the actual assessment.
2. Coordinating the actual assessment process by scheduling, selecting team members, assessing teachers and compiling and processing assessment data.
3. Providing feedback to teachers through an interpretation of assessment results and delivery of a performance profile.

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On-the-job assessment is a requirement for all teachers who enter the profession. The teacher is provided three years or six assessment opportunities to demonstrate proficiency on all 14 competencies necessary to convert to the renewable Performance-based Teaching (PBT) certificate. Individuals who receive the PBT within the first two years receive extra step(s) on the state salary schedule. This advancement policy makes Georgia the first state in the U.S. to award performance-based compensation.

The state has a provision that will allow a teacher to waive an assessment opportunity. If for a specific reason a teacher wishes to forgo an assessment opportunity, the teacher contacts the area Regional Assessment Center and files a request. While there are six opportunities offered to each teacher, the waiver of an assessment opportunity will result in the permanent loss of that scheduled assessment opportunity as well as loss of the privilege to combine results of any assessment conducted prior to the signing of the waiver. The department does not advise waiving an opportunity for an assessment, but it is permitted and the wise choice under some circumstances. A few teachers who are sure that they will be leaving the state or the profession elect to forgo the assessment, and they have that right.

Each of the assessment instruments is scored independently by a three-member team selected by the regional assessment center and composed of an administrator and a peer, both from the local school system, and an external data collector from the regional assessment center. At least one member of this team must hold a current, valid certificate in the same field as the teacher being assessed. Each person on the assessment team carries out the following responsibilities.

1. Individually reviews and studies the portfolio of the teacher being assessed and prepares for interviewing the teacher.
2. Participates in an interview of the teacher being assessed.
3. Individually observes, at a predetermined and agreed upon date and time, the teacher being assessed as he/she teaches from the portfolio submitted.

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4. Submits assessment data to the Regional Assessment Center for processing.

5. Maintains the confidentiality of the assessment data.

To participate as a member of an assessment team, each administrator, peer or external data collector must be trained to use the instruments and must meet proficiency requirements in use of the instruments. These training requirements include 50 hours of instruction and practice with the instruments in the field. In addition, the trainee may be required to prepare a portfolio and be assessed. No one serves on an assessment team for certification purposes without meeting current state training requirements. In addition, annual update training is provided and interrater agreement checks are conducted to help maintain accuracy and skill in using the instruments.

The state assessment calendar is based on a school year of 190 contract days and 180 teaching days. Orientation to the assessment process normally is provided by the regional assessment center within the first 30 days of the contract peiod. For most teachers, this occurs during preplanning. The fall assessment period begins after the first 20 teaching days, although teachers having their first assessment begin it only after their first 30 teaching days. There must be a minimum of 50 teaching days between a fall and spring assessment. Spring assessments begin on the 110th teaching day. No assessments are scheduled during the last ten teaching days.

The assessment of an individual teacher is scheduled in advance with the teacher's particpation in identifying the class and times for the assessment. The actual assessment period is based on the teacher's development of a seven- to 10-day set of lesson plans or portfolio. Since a due date for the portfolio is part of the scheduling process and is agreed upon in advance, and since the portfolio is a major component of the assessment requiring careful study by all team members, it is imperative that the complete portfolio be submitted by the due

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date. A team interview and three individual observations are scheduled to take place during the first five days of the portfolio period. The one-hour interview occurs first, with the three assessment team members questioning the teacher about teaching plans and materials. Subsequently, each member of the assessment team, separately and on different days, observes the teacher for a full class period during the portfolio period. Teachers in elementary grades are encouraged to plan for and schedule periods longer than the 30-minute minimum as it is often difficult to demonstrate within this limited time frame all of the teaching behaviors addressed in the two observation instruments. All assessment activities must be conducted with the teacher teaching in a field in which he/she is certified.

Although the regional assessment center is responsible for scheduling all assessment-related activities, the teacher may choose the time of day for classroom observations. In addition, the teacher also chooses the class for whom the portfolio will be prepared and in which the observations will occur. The class chosen must be in a subject area within the teacher's field of certification. Allowing these elements of choice enables the teacher to develop a portfolio or plan a unit which is an integral part of his/her instructional program.

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The regional assessment center processes all assessment data and develops a performance profile for the individual teacher. This profile and certification summary reflect a compilation of the data from all three members of the assessment team. Center personnel deliver and interpret the profile in a conference to help the assessed teacher understand the results and his/her status in relation to the performance requirement. The performance profile shows all ratings but presents them in a scrambled manner. The center maintains confidentiality of performance profiles and will not reveal individual ratings.

A copy of the performance profile will be released to the local school system or other agency designated to provide staff development opportunities for the teacher assessed. In addition, performance data will be released to the college or

university attended by the assessed teacher to be used for program evaluation. If a teacher does not wish the data to be released to the local school system and/or college or university attended, written notification so requesting must be provided to the assessment center.

It is only at this point -- the provision of staff development based on assessed needs -- that colleges become involved in Georgia's assessment process. During the development and implementation of the entire program, efforts were purposefully made to separate the preparation and assessment phases. The idea was to establish, through the TCT and the TPAI, an external check on the preparation program.

Colleges are encouraged, however, to become involved in staff development for assessed teachers. In many instances college people are working closely with local school districts and with Georgia's regional agencies, Cooperative Education Service Agencies, to provide staff development based on assessed needs. Ideally, master's degree programs would also be based on assessed needs.

If a teacher does not demonstrate mastery on all 14 competencies, the next assessment scheduled will be a partial assessment addressing those competencies of which the teacher has not demonstrated mastery. The exact procedures to be followed and definition of what is to be required of the teacher are determined by the nature of the competencies to be assessed. The regional assessment center will provide the teacher with an individual orientation and establish clear directions for the partial assessment, which must be based on a new portfolio or a different instructional unit. Submission of a portfolio used in a previous assessment invalidates the partial assessment.

The majority of teachers require more than one assessment to meet certification requirements. For example, of all teachers assessed for the first time during the fall of 1982, 27 percent demonstrated mastery of all 14 competencies on their first assessment. Similarly, of all teachers assessed for the first time during the fall of 1983, 28 percent demonstrated mastery of all 14

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competencies. Additional assessments were required for the remaining teachers to meet certification requirements. Although the majority of teachers assessed for the first time do not demonstrate mastery of all 14 competencies, they have not failed. Generally, by the end of the second assessment or the end of the initial teaching year, approximately 75 percent of the teachers successfully complete the assessment process. For those who have not, additional assessment opportunities and staff development are available.

Staff Development

The Georgia Department of Education provides funds to local school systems for teacher staff development based upon the needs of teachers identified through on-the-job assessment. The performance profile, reflecting all the data gathered in the assessment process, provides a clear delineation of areas of strength and areas in which a teacher may need some assistance to improve specific teaching skills and/or techniques. This needs-assessment capability of the instrument and the on-the-job assessment make assessment during the initial year of employment even more important. It is a vehicle that allows a teacher to improve the teaching skills acquired in his/her preparation program, to develop new skills and techniques and generally improve his/her capabilities to provide effective instruction. The responsibility for providing teacher staff development rests with the local school system, not with the regional assessment center. The center can help teachers identify agencies in their areas that may provide assistance, but execution of a staff development program is the responsibility of the individual teacher and the local school system.

Evaluation and Results

More than 6,000 Georgia educators have been involved in evaluating the on-the-job assessment of the beginning teachers phase of Performance-based Certification. The group included beginning teachers, peer teachers and administrators on assessment teams, school system liaison personnel and regional assessment center data collectors.

Beginning teachers considered the information provided at their orientation adequate and the Regional Assessment Center personnel prepared and knowledgeable. During their interview, they felt that there was an effort to put them at ease and to give them an opportunity to explain their teaching plans. After their assessment was completed and a profile of their performance was generated, the beginning teacher was provided an interpretation session. They indicated that it was clear and informative and that there was information on staff development resources. These conclusions were supported with 90 percent or better positive responses.

Peer teachers and administrators said that their participation in the assessment process gave them a better awareness of the basic skills of teaching and that their school system used the results for teacher growth. This group indicated that the overall process was worthwhile, with 95 percent positive responses. School system liaison personnel and the data collectors from the Regional Assessment Center evaluated the assessment process with more than 95 percent positive responses.

The Georgia Teacher Certification Test and the on-the-job assessment program have been extremely beneficial to Georgia. This has been a pioneer effort with some problems but many successes. Many who were concerned about the program in the beginning are now among its strongest advocates. We believe that teachers in Georgia classrooms today are better prepared than ever before and that

they are the key to the significantly improved student performance we have seen in recent years.

The Georgia plan may not be the answer for everyone; we designed it to meet the needs of our particular situation. We are constantly evaluating, revising and improving the procedures, and this process will continue. After using the test for six years and the assessment for four years, we feel very comfortable with the combination. What we have learned will undoubtedly be helpful to us as we work in the next few years toward implementing the career ladder proposed recently by the Governor's Education Review Commission.

Georgia's peformance-based certification process of assessment, feedback, supportive supervision and staff development is a pioneer, creative and comprehensive approach to the controversial nationwide problem of teacher competency evaluation. It has received extensive press coverage and national recognition. Education officials from many other states have shown interest in the program and several, including Mississippi, Alabama, Arizona, South Carolina and Oklahoma, have adopted part of the state's testing and assessment procedures and/or instruments. Florida, Tennessee and Maryland, among others, are drawing from Georgia's pioneering efforts in developing their own teacher evaluation/ certification programs.

The Georgia certification program has set a national standard for teacher competency measurement with its dual emphasis on knowledge and performance. A recent NIE report (Teacher Testing: 1984) closes with this statement: "One could conclude that Georgia planted a seed that has grown and is spreading." While the program is based on objective judgment, it also has a backbone of support for the teachers it serves. These elements, along with the program's careful and responsive development, have ensured the success of performance-based certification with government officials, the education community, the teachers who undergo the certification process and, most important, the public.

THE FUTURE

Expand Performance-Based Certification

Initially the plan was to require Performance-Based Certification of leadership and service as well as teaching personnel. Development in these areas has been curtailed because of budget reductions combined with a concern of the State School Superintendent and others that the role of school leadership was not well defined and perhaps there were few generic competencies which could be specified for this role.

School effectiveness research influenced the Governor's Education Review Commission in its 1984 report to recommend that the Georgia State Board of Education add an assessment requirement for certification in leadership and the service areas of media, counseling and school psychology. Funds will be requested from the 1985 Georgia Legislature to develop performance assessment instruments in these four areas. Development, field testing and the preparation of personnel in leadership areas, service areas and regional assessment centers to apply the assessment instruments will take more than two years. It is anticipated that assessments will begin in the fall of 1987 and that anyone completing initial preparation in leadership or service areas September 1, 1987 or later will be required to pass a performance assessment in order to earn a renewable certificate. Certification tests in administration-supervision, media, counseling and school psychology are now in effect. Assessment in these areas will complete performance-based certification in each of these fields. The Governor's Education Review Commission is recommending funds equal to 1/2 percent of total salaries be provided for staff development. If this proposal is funded approximately $90.00 for each public school educator will be provided each year. During the first three years in a leadership or service role these staff development funds should be used to address needs identified by the assessment. After renewal certification is earned annual evaluations by the local system, as required by Georgia School Standards, should serve as the basis for staff development.

The entry level certificate for leadership and service is the master's degree. Baccalaureate preparation in a teaching field and three years of teaching

experience is prerequisite to certification in these fields. A person must pass the certification test during the first year on the job and will have up to three years on a non-renewable leadership or service certificate to demonstrate acceptable performance. Those persons meeting the performance standard will be issued a renewable certificate.

Persons holding a master's degree in a teaching field have two options for meeting the college preparation requirements in school leadership. Completion of college courses to meet an evaluation from the certification office against minimum certification standards or completion of a college approved program can result in certification. There is more accountability in the approved program because screening for admission and completion of the program is required while minimum certification requirements through an evaluation can be met through an accumulation of courses from several different institutions. The Governor's Education Review Commission is recommending that the State Board of Education adopt the approved program as the only way to certification in leadership because of its increased accountability. Many changes in Criteria for Approved Programs in Georgia are being recommended which will require more structure in the programs and assure more preparation as an instructional leader. An internship, which is now optional, will become a requirement.

Career Ladder

The Governor's Education Review Commission is recommending a career ladder for teachers which is competitive and market sensitive. A primary objective is to make teaching attractive with the result that outstanding teachers can afford to remain in the classroom and bright young people can be recruited into the profession.

Criteria for moving up the ladder include: experience at each level; increased knowledge as measured by the Teacher Certification Tests; increased performance as measured by the TPAI; increased responsibility such as supervision of student and beginning teachers, curriculum development and the provision of staff development for other teachers; and increased student learning above some type of standard. The latter criterion is most controversial and could result in a dramatic expansion of student statewide testing and assessment. The consensus now appears to be that the career ladder will be implemented without student gain as a criterion.

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The TCT's and TPAI's were developed to test and assess beginning teachers. They will have to be validated at higher levels for use with experienced teachers. Two of the TPAI's have never been used for certification purposes. Student Perceptions were not used because we were not willing to face the possibility of students having to appear as witnesses in court if the State was sued. The Student Perceptions Instrument has been field tested extensively, however, and show that they are very similar in their perceptions to the professional data collector who serves full time in the assessment role. Administrators and peer teachers are generally slightly less critical in their assessments. The Professional Standards Instrument has not been applied for certification purposes because it measures professional responsibilities and engagement in professional self-development more appropriately expected of an experienced teacher. It would be reasonable to apply these instruments for purposes of certification decision making at the higher performance levels expected of career teachers.

It is anticipated that observations of teacher performance for career ladder advancement will be random and unannounced. Teachers desiring to be assessed could submit each month a list of protected days when testing and other activities were going on and expect assessment at any other time. Observations of beginning teachers are scheduled well in advance so that the beginning teacher has every opportunity to prepare and exhibit the best possible teaching practice. Performance-Based Certification is designed for the beginning teacher to demonstrate that they are capable of effective teaching practice. For career ladder purposes an experienced teacher should be able to demonstrate that they consistently exhibit effective teaching practice as shown in random, unannounced observations.

We are confident that the identification of teacher needs through assessment of performance, the provision of staff development to specifically address these needs and annual evaluation of the teacher in terms of teaching performance and the extent to which local aims and objectives are met will result in student learning. When this procedure is broadened to include leadership and service personnel and recruitment and retention of outstanding teachers is improved through the application of a career ladder, there should be observable improvement in public education in Georgia.